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## Letter dated 10 June 2011 from the Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and to Security Council resolution 1981 (2011), by which the Council authorized the extension, up to 30 June 2011, of the temporary redeployment from the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) to UNOCI of three infantry companies, one aviation unit comprising two military utility helicopters and three armed helicopters with crews. In that same resolution, the Council requested me to provide it with an updated analysis and recommendations on the inter-mission cooperation arrangements by 15 June 2011.

In that regard, the Office of Military Affairs of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations conducted a military capability study in Côte d'Ivoire from 21 to 29 April 2011 and in Liberia from 3 to 6 May 2011. In addition, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations-led interdepartmental assessment mission, which visited Côte d'Ivoire from 1 to 14 May 2011, conducted a threat assessment that is pertinent to the issue of the military utility and armed helicopters referred to above.

The military capability study concluded that the two military utility helicopters would be required in Liberia in light of the upcoming Liberian national referendum and elections, which are scheduled to take place in August and the autumn of 2011, respectively. The military utility helicopters will therefore be returned to UNMIL before 30 June 2011. At the same time, given the extremely fragile security situation in Côte d'Ivoire and the high risk of renewed conflict or violence that would require adequate troop transportation capacity for the rapid deployment of the UNOCI force reserve, the Secretariat is exploring various options to deploy a replacement unit to UNOCI, at least for the duration of the legislative elections. This capacity would enable the force both to operate and react in a timely manner to incidents throughout the country and consolidate troop positions in the most sensitive areas, particularly in Abidjan and the west.

I therefore intend to ask Member States for a replacement unit comprising two military utility helicopters under the already authorized UNOCI troop reinforcements and would be grateful if members of the Security Council could support this approach. At the same time, taking into account the recent challenges in securing military utility helicopters from Member States, it would be prudent to keep open the option whereby, if the situation in Liberia permits, military utility



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helicopters from UNMIL could again be redeployed to UNOCI to meet specific needs, based on coordination between the two missions.

Both the military capability study and the threat assessment determined that temporary deployment of the three armed helicopters to Côte d'Ivoire is still required beyond 30 June 2011. As already conveyed in my letter to the Security Council dated 11 May 2011, the security situation in the country, especially in Abidjan and the west, remains extremely precarious. The Forces républicains de Côte d'Ivoire, which assumed responsibility for restoring security, remain a motley bunch and are wrestling with discipline-related challenges as well as command and control issues. There is still a high risk of renewed armed conflict and continued attacks against the civilian population, including with heavy weapons. These could be initiated by pro-Gbagbo militias, mercenaries and ex-Forces de défense et de sécurité (FDS) personnel routed from Abidjan, who are attempting to regroup in pro-Gbagbo strongholds in the west; the Young Patriots who still have access to arms; elements of the "invisible commandos" who have gone into hiding since their leader was killed; as well as the many ex-Republican Guard soldiers who have melted into the civilian population in Abidjan still carrying weapons. At the time of the assessment mission, heavy weapons were still being used in the Yopougon district of Abidjan. These heavy weapons, as well as those in the hands of the unaccounted-for ex-Republican Guard soldiers, have yet to be retrieved. In addition, cross-border movement of mercenaries, militias and arms has become a direct security threat to both Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, and increased the risk of a spillover of violence into Liberia.

The three armed helicopters provide high deterrent value and response capacity against the many spoilers in Côte d'Ivoire, both to prevent their regrouping in strongholds in western Côte d'Ivoire and to deter cross-border movement of militias and mercenaries. The armed helicopters give UNOCI the mobility required to ensure adequate monitoring of the borders and the surrounding areas, as well as a timely response to anticipated cross-border incidents and other militia and mercenary activities in the west. In that regard, I wish to take this opportunity to thank Ukraine for its critical contribution.

UNMIL and UNOCI agreed that the three armed helicopters should be retained in UNOCI for now, on the understanding that these assets will be tasked to operate mainly in western Côte d'Ivoire, particularly along border areas for special reconnaissance and deterrence operations. Specifically, the two missions have agreed on a schedule under which the armed helicopters would conduct three special border reconnaissance operations per week during the month of June, with new schedules to be decided on for each subsequent month. The information gathered from these operations will be used by both missions. In addition, the armed helicopters will be used to provide deterrence from the air in support of specific ground operations, where necessary, and in this regard, the helicopters would undertake missions in support of specific UNMIL operations, if required. The Secretariat has also requested UNOCI to explore the possibility of stationing the armed helicopters at an airfield in western Côte d'Ivoire. UNOCI will provide regular updates which could be shared with members of the Security Council if they so request. During the last 10 days of the month of May, UNOCI conducted a total of eight air reconnaissance missions along the Côte d'Ivoire-Liberia border, three of which were undertaken by the armed helicopters and five by other mission air assets. On 21 May, senior military officers from UNMIL visited UNOCI to follow

up on earlier videoconference discussions between the two missions and the Secretariat on ways of further strengthening coordinated actions to address cross-border issues. Attached is a summary of the main actions agreed upon between the two missions in this regard.

In light of the above, I recommend that the Security Council authorize a further extension of the temporary redeployment of the three armed helicopters from UNMIL to UNOCI on the understanding that the Secretariat will conduct a further review at the end of September. Meanwhile, based on regular updates on the usage of the three armed helicopters to be submitted by UNOCI, the Secretariat will keep the matter under constant review.

I should be grateful if you would bring this letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon

## Annex

### Summary of main actions agreed upon between UNMIL and UNOCI

**Mapping**: Collaboration to develop an agreed map of the border and an agreed list of all official and unofficial crossing sites.

**Deployment**: Information-sharing regarding dispositions along the border of military, police and Government agencies. UNOCI redeployments of a company each to Toulépleu and Tabou are ongoing. The area in between these two locations will be covered by long-range patrols. One company will also be deployed on a temporary basis to Tai, as soon as support arrangements permit. UNOCI considers that deploying troops on a permanent basis in Tai is not feasible, given the logistical constraints. UNMIL has deployed additional troops to the border area during the conflict and prepared for the deployment of an additional team of military observers to Fish Town, River Gee County. UNMIL civilian police, including formed police units, and Liberian authorities, including the Liberian National Police, the Emergency Response Unit and the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization, have strengthened their presence in the border area with a focus on hot spots and important border crossings.

**Patrols**: UNMIL and UNOCI patrol programmes along the Côte d'Ivoire-Liberia border should be shared and coordinated. Communications between patrols should be strengthened with a view to enabling warnings to be passed, deconflicting patrol activity, sharing patrol reports and establishing greater cooperation between units on the ground. As extensive foot patrolling on both sides of the border is at times hampered by access constraints, UNMIL covers remote and inaccessible areas through air-inserted foot patrols. At present, UNOCI does not conduct air-inserted foot patrols along the border but is exploring the possibility of doing so in the near future.

**Information**: All operational information will be shared. Joint situational assessments and information collection requirements are to be shared with the other mission.

**Meetings**: The conduct of concurrent patrols by UNMIL and UNOCI along the Liberian-Ivorian border ("Operation Mayo") should be reinvigorated, and their frequency and level of participation increased.

**Liaison**: Existing liaison arrangements to enhance information-sharing and coordination will be strengthened. Further exchange of liaison officers between units from battalion level and upwards must be considered, including for the purpose of ensuring effective information-sharing arrangements between military observers and field offices from both missions. Regular videoconferences will be conducted between UNOCI and UNMIL.

**Coordination of air assets**: The MI-24s will conduct frequent patrols along the border based on joint tasking that meets the requirements of both missions.

**River patrols**: The possibility of conducting patrols by boat on the Cavalla River will be scoped, although the logistical challenge should not be underestimated.

In undertaking the above activities, UNMIL and UNOCI should be able to strengthen cooperation arrangements with the respective national authorities, as appropriate.